

In the claims:

Claims 1-3. (Canceled)

Claim 4. (Currently Amended) A backing plate for a drum brake assembly comprising an abutment plate comprising a first part configured to be attached to an axle housing of a vehicle and a second part extending from said first part and configured to resist braking forces applied thereto by brake shoes during braking, and a shielding plate extending radially beyond said abutment plate and configured to shield brake components, wherein the area occupied by said abutment plate is less than that occupied by said shielding plate, said shielding plate is configured to support a hydraulic cylinder for operating said drum brake, said abutment and shielding plates are made of different materials, and said shielding plate is made of damped steel that dampens noise and vibrations.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel of approximately equal thickness.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel.

Claim 8 (Cancelled)

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) A shielding plate comprising a sheet of damped steel configured to be attached to a vehicle and at least partially encompass brake components to protect said brake components from dust and dirt and to support a hydraulic cylinder to operate said brake components, and an abutment plate of smaller structural area than said shielding plate configured to engage a vehicle housing and to engage brake shoes and to resist braking forces applied by said brake shoes, wherein said abutment plate and shielding plate are made of different materials.

Claim 10 (Original) A shielding plate according to claim 9 wherein said brake components are components of a drum brake.

Claim 11 (Cancelled)

Claim 12 (Previously Presented) A shielding plate according to claim 9 wherein said damped steel comprises first and second layers of steel on opposite sides of a dampening material, said first and second layers having approximately equal thickness.

Claim 13, 14. (Canceled)

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) A drum brake comprising an abutment plate comprising a sheet of steel having a first part configured to attach to an axle housing and a second part configured to resist braking forces applied by brake shoes, and a shielding plate made of ~~damped steel~~vibration dampening material attached to said abutment plate and configured to support said brake shoes, wherein said abutment plate and said shielding plate are made of different materials.

Claim 16 (Original) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said shielding plate is configured to receive a hydraulic cylinder.

Claim 17 (Currently Amended) A drum brake according to claim 15 wherein said sound dampening material comprises ~~damped steel comprises comprising~~ two sheets of steel of ~~approximately equal thickness.~~

Claim 18. (New) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said abutment plate is made of steel having a thickness of 3mm to 6mm.

Claim 19. (New) A backing plate according to claim 4 wherein said damped steel has a thickness of 0.8mm to 1.2mm.